

REVIEWS

The Review Section of E&A consists of three parts. The first is made up of brief reviews of books and articles (and perhaps films, etc.) that are concerned in some way with the rights and wrongs of human treatment of non-human animals. The second part of this Section is entitled 'Replies' and contains comments on or responses to reviews published in earlier issues of E&A. By letter the Editor invites the authors of works reviewed to respond, and by this proclamation in each issue invites all other interested readers to submit comments. The third part of the Reviews Section is a list of works of which reviews are invited. Any member who wishes to review any work in this continuing 'Reviews Needed' list should contact the Editor.

Tom Regan, *All That Dwell Therein: Essays on Animal Rights and Environmental Ethics*
(Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), 1982
pp. 249, \$18.95

This collection of essays is an important sequel to the work of another philosopher, Peter Singer, whose *Animal Liberation - A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals*, (Avon Books, 1975) has been widely quoted by those who would emancipate animals. In *Animal Liberation* the central thesis is that animals have moral standing, deriving from undeniable, empirical evidence that they are sentient individuals, sharing with man the capacity to experience pain and pleasure, and whose interests in terms of needs, desires, purposes, goals, and so on, ought therefore to be given equal consideration with the like interests of humans. By arguing for equal consideration of interests as between humans and other animal species, Singer unwittingly set the stage for what has since become a widely based campaign to secure for animals a benefit that has hitherto been considered the exclusive preserve of humans: recognition of the right to be treated in accordance with universally accepted principles of morality and justice, a right that would be legally enforceable in the courts. There can be no question that if this campaign succeeds, it

could usher in fundamental changes in human customs and attitudes toward various classes of animals: those used for food, in experimentation, in the manufacture of clothing and cosmetics, for sport, and in many other ways.

In *All That Dwell Therein*, Regan goes further than Singer. Firstly, he invokes the idea that all or some animals may indeed qualify as rights holders, something which Singer refuses to do, since "that would be making a concession to popular moral rhetoric". Secondly, he proposes a generalized theory of rights which is based not on Singer's equal consideration of interests principle, nor on sentience, which other philosophers have cited in arguing the case for rights, but rather on the view that the most reasonable criterion of rights possession is what he calls the criterion of inherent value. By this is meant that the individual in question, whether human or non-human, is not only a living being but is also the subject of a life that is better or worse for him (her), independently of whether anyone else finds his (her) life useful, or to put it in the language of the philosopher, "of a life

which is logically independent of any other being's taking an interest in it."

Uncompelling as this may seem at the outset, it proves to be a recurring theme in more than half of the essays, which, as we are told in the Preface, consist of "papers and lectures written and delivered over the past six years or so on the general topic of human obligations to non-humans. The non-humans at issue include not only non-human animals, though our obligations to animals, and their rights against us, are major themes in most of the essays; also at issue is the question of the foundations of our moral relations to nature generally . . . This latter question comes into full flower in the last three essays, but it is a question that is growing just beneath the surface throughout".

To those readers who have thought at length about the rights issue, it will come as no surprise to learn that if rights are to be ascribed to animals, that is, to some or all living animals ranging in size from the great whales to amoebas, irrespective of the inter- and intra-species differences in intelligence, physiology, behavior and communication capacities that they may or may not exhibit, the definitive solution to the question may ultimately be grounded in the wider context of environmental ethics. The very title of this book indicates that it is not only animals, collectively and individually (including *Homo sapiens*) on which attention is being focused, but also the rights of present and future generations to the enjoyment of satisfactory places of habitation. Thus, it is mankind's moral obligation to protect, or at the very least, not to harm, the biocoenosis or biosphere as a whole: the land, the water and the air and all who live there and depend on it for their continued sustenance and existence, that is the underlying

issue of this book.

Given the theory that the criterion of inherent worth is the most reasonable criterion of rights possession, it is logical to ask "Can the concept of inherent value be applied to inanimate nature?", more particularly in light of the explanatory passages contained in essays 3, 4, and 6, where "inherent value" is used specifically in reference to animate individuals. In essays 8 and 9, however, which are titled respectively "What Sorts of Beings Can Have Rights?" and "The Nature and Possibility of an Environmental Ethic", the author makes some initial, halting, steps toward establishing that "a genuine ethic of the environment, distinct from a 'management ethic', which views the natural order as a system of 'resources' calling for 'wise management', and from a 'kinship ethic', which widens the scope of those meriting direct moral concern to include sentient non-humans" could be rooted in such a value. Here he examines and finds wanting, arguments advanced by those who challenge the view that "non-conscious non-sentient objects (such as trees, flowers and even rivers) have a good or value of their own", and sketches in outline the essentials of an ethic that would recognize the independent value of both the fauna and the flora of the natural order. In so doing, he draws attention to the manifest inadequacy of the traditional notions of cruelty and kindness, previously discussed in essays 3 ("Animal Experimentation: First Thoughts"), 4 ("Animal Rights, Human Wrongs") and 5 ("Why Whaling is Wrong") as means of preventing or alleviating suffering inflicted by humans, and helps prepare the way for the development of a "deep ecology" rather than a "shallow environmentalism" view of our obligations to the natural world. These ideas are more fully developed in the final essay, which examines the early history and possible motivations of the

North American Indian peoples' involvement in the fur trade, when fur-bearing animals as well as buffalo were systematically overkilled, even to the point of rendering local populations of the animals extinct.

No review of these essays would be complete if it failed to draw attention to the emphasis which is placed by Regan on our moral obligation to be vegetarians. In the first essay ("The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism") he argues that the right to life and the moral right not to be caused gratuitous suffering "are possessed by the animals we eat if they are possessed by the humans we do not". After examining the manner in which animals are raised and killed under modern factory farming conditions, he points out that almost everyone who buys meat at a typical supermarket or restaurant is *causally implicated* in a practice which causes pain that is both "non-trivial and undeserved" for the animals in question. But as he shows later in the essay, it is the killing of animals, and not just their pain, that matters morally.

Regan argues that just as we are all rationally entitled to demand that

those who are implicated in a practice that causes non-trivial, undeserved pain to human beings must show how it is that the practice, and their role in it, is not immoral, so also is the vegetarian in a position where he can rationally demand that those who lead a life contrary to his show how it is that *their* way of life can be morally justified. Nevertheless, he does not claim that all practices that involve the killing of animals for food cannot possibly be justified. The situation of the Eskimo (Inuit) is cited as one instance in which this could be so.

In bringing before the public a collection of writings by one of the foremost thinkers in this domain, *All That Dwell Therein* has much to offer all those readers whose interests, concerns, occupations, and academic or professional affiliations cause them to ponder the true nature of man's ethical obligations to non-human life and the environment. More particularly, it should be of interest to legislators, educators and others who may be in a position to influence the course of our moral and cultural evolution.

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